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# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

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## Permitting a Septage Site in New Hampshire

### What is a Septage Site?

Septage is defined in state statute RSA 485-A:2, IX-a as: "the material removed from septic tanks, cesspools, holding tanks, or other sewage treatment storage units, excluding sewage sludge from public treatment works and industrial waste and any other sludge." The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services further defines septage to include solids and other material removed from septage lagoons, waste from portable toilet and Type III marine sanitation devices, and grease trap waste that has been co-mingled with wastewater. Only domestic septage as defined in Env-Wq 1602.12, excluding portable toilet and marine sanitation device waste, shall be land applied. A *septage site* is defined as a contiguous land area owned by the same person on which domestic septage is land applied, even if the land area is divided by a highway, rail bed, water body or boundary of a political subdivision.

According to Env-Wq 1603.01, which is part of DES's *Septage Management Rule*, persons wishing to manage septage outside of a location regulated under RSA 485-A:13 (wastewater treatment plants), RSA 149-M (solid waste facility) or RSA 485-C (groundwater management) must first obtain a site, facility, transfer/storage permit or septage holding permit-by-notification issued in accordance with Env-Wq 1600. The person proposing to undertake septage management activities at a site shall apply for a site permit through DES's Wastewater Engineering Bureau.

A typical *septage site* involves the land application of domestic septage for agricultural purposes. The permit process includes evaluation of site suitability as well as surrounding land use. If a *septage site permit* is issued, there are very specific federal and state regulations that protect human health and the environment, which must be followed along with specified conditions in the permit.

### Why Permit a Septage Site?

As population increases, so does the need to develop solutions for septage management since about 65 percent of existing and 80 percent of all new housing relies on septic systems. Land applying septage makes sense because it involves the recycling of nutrients and other beneficial organic matter. Recycling nutrients is one way to increase sustainability of soil fertility in New Hampshire. Land application of septage must be at agronomic rates (not in excess of annual plant/crop nutrient requirements) to protect the environment. Septage haulers are faced with the challenge of finding treatment facilities to accept septage. Many municipal wastewater treatment facilities have a difficult time processing septage because they have limited capacity to handle it.

This forces septage haulers to travel greater distances to discharge their loads, which leads to higher costs for the homeowner.

### **What is the Procedure for Permitting a Septage Site?**

A *site permit application* must be completed and submitted to DES. The application must include all attachments, signatures and public notifications. The required information includes but is not limited to:

- Applicant and applicant's business information.
- Who will be managing the site and when.
- Information about the location of the proposed site.
- Type of land application activities being proposed at the site, such as agricultural land application, forest application, or stockpiling.
- A Site Plan prepared in accordance with Env-Wq 1608.07.
- A Management Plan prepared in accordance with Env-Wq 1608.08.
- Soil testing in accordance with Env-Wq 1608.12.
- A statement signed by the applicant certifying:
  - The applicant has complied with the notification requirements of Env-Wq 1604.01.
  - All operators of the site have been instructed on the requirements of Env-Wq 1600 or shall be instructed prior to working at the site.
  - A copy of the application had been submitted to the governing body of the municipality in which the activity is proposed to occur.
  - The information submitted is accurate.
  - The applicant has not been convicted of a misdemeanor under any statute administered by the department within the five years prior to the date of application, or of a felony in any state or federal court during the ten years prior to the date of application.

Each application shall be submitted in duplicate and accompanied by the fee specified in Env-Wq 1608.05. Once DES considers the permit application complete, the DES will notify the applicant and the governing body of the municipality where the site will be located. The DES will publish a public notice in a local paper of a 30-day comment period on the complete application. If ten property owners from the municipality where the activity is to be located provide written requests for a public hearing, the DES will organize the hearing and publish a public notice in a local paper scheduling the hearing. Following the hearing, the department shall issue a facility permit if it meets criteria specified in Env-Wq 1608.06.

### **How to Obtain a Septage Site Permit Application?**

The Septage Management Rules, Env-Wq 1600, can be obtained by visiting the DES website at [http://www.des.nh.gov/rules/desadmin\\_list.htm](http://www.des.nh.gov/rules/desadmin_list.htm), and Septage site permit application forms can be obtained by visiting the DES Wastewater Engineering Bureau website at <http://des.nh.gov/wwe/septslud.htm> or by calling the Residuals Management Section at (603) 271-7888.